



First Amendment Activities

Freedom of speech, press, religion, and assembly are rights protected by the First Amendment of the Constitution of the United States. People may exercise these rights in national parks, but the National Park Service (NPS) still retains its responsibility to protect park resources and prevent conflict among park visitors. Therefore, the NPS establishes guidelines for setting the time, place and manner (number of participants, use of facilities and type of equipment) for the events to occur.

- By law, the NPS has established places in parks where First Amendment activities can be accommodated. These areas are visible to the general visiting public without interfering with the public's enjoyment of the park. While the NPS regulates aspects of the activity to protect park resources, it never regulates the content of the message.
- Special Use Permits are issued for First Amendment activities, but there are no fees or costs, and no insurance is required for the activities.
- Groups of 25 or fewer people may demonstrate or distribute or sell printed matter in designated available areas without obtaining a permit.
- All requests for similar activities are treated equally. As long as permit criteria and requirements are met, no group wishing to assemble lawfully will be discriminated against or denied the right of assembly.

Types of First Amendment Activities

- Religious services or ceremonies
- Press conference
- Press coverage of breaking news
- Voter registration
- Collecting signatures on petitions or voter initiatives
- Public demonstration, picketing, assembly or rally for expressing opinion and views
- Sale or distribution of printed material related to free expression of opinion

Type of Activities that are NOT covered by the First Amendment

- Church picnic or social gathering
- Wedding ceremonies or receptions
- Political fund raiser or other invitation-only political activity or event
- Solicitation of donations
- Community parades, athletics, or sporting events
- Scattering of cremated human remains ("cremains")

Many of the non-First Amendment activities can be accommodated through the Special Use permit system for which a fee may be charged. Liability insurance may be required. Refer to the **Special Use Permit** page on the park website for additional information.

Locations: The areas available for public assemblies and the sale and distribution of printed materials have been identified in the **Superintendent's Compendium** in Section 2.51(e) and Section 2.52(e).

Applications: Complete the *Application for Special Use Permit*. Please review the **Terms & Conditions** below before submitting the permit application as they outline the specific requirements and restrictions of the permit. Mail the completed application to: Ozark National Scenic Riverways, Attn: Commercial Services Program Office, P. O. Box 490, Van Buren, Missouri 63965. The completed application should be received **at least** ten business days prior to the date the permit is needed. There are no fees or charges associated with a First Amendment application or permit.

Permits: Once your application is approved, a Special Use Permit will be prepared and mailed to you for signature. Upon receipt, please review, sign and return the permit to our office for the Superintendent's signature. After the Superintendent signs the permit, a signed copy of the permit will be forwarded to you. *The approved, signed permit copy must be in your possession at the time of the activity.*

Terms & Conditions: To maintain park natural and cultural resources and quality visitor experiences the following criteria apply to Special Use Permits for First Amendment activities:

1. The activity must not conflict with any scheduled NPS function or program.
2. First Amendment activities involving public assemblies or the sale or distribution of printed matter will be conducted in designated areas as specified in the Ozark National Scenic Riverways Superintendent's Compendium.
3. Permits for First Amendment activities and for the sale and distribution of printed matter are limited to 14 consecutive days. A permit is renewable for like periods upon completion of another application, and provided no other application has been received and no prevailing park use has been identified for the area requested.
4. The NPS reserves the right to immediately revoke the permit at any time should this become necessary in the interest of public safety, public health and general welfare.
5. The person or group will comply with any instructions from a designated official representative from Ozark National Scenic Riverways.
6. The area used by the permittee will be left in the same condition as found and all litter placed in trash receptacles.
7. Structures, including tents and portable pavilions may not be erected.
8. No items may be attached to NPS property (fences, trees, trash receptacles, etc.). Banners and signs which are hand carried are allowed and must not pose a danger to anyone else in the area.
9. Electrical power will not be furnished nor will generators be allowed.
10. Any portable public address system being used will be so adjusted as to accommodate only those people in the immediate area.
11. Participants are to avoid language which implies any official connections to the NPS and its activities.
12. Good order and proper decorum shall be maintained by the person or persons conducting and participating in the event and the person or persons will leave the area at the conclusion time stated on

the permit. It is prohibited for anyone engaged in activities covered under the permit to obstruct or impede pedestrians or vehicles, or harass park visitor or misrepresent their purposes. Permittee agrees to maintain public access in the area.

13. Failure to comply with the provisions of the permit will result in its immediate revocation.

Other stipulations may be added depending on the specific nature of your request.

If you have any questions about the application process or your permit, please contact the Commercial Services Program Office at (573) 323-4864 or email: peggy_tarrence@nps.gov.

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